

REPORT TO: Children, Young People and Families Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 13 December 2012

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise

PORTFOLIO: Children, Young People and Families

SUBJECT: Adoption Scorecard

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The report sets out Halton's position in relation to the Adoption Scorecard that was published by Department for Education 30 November 2012. Each Local Authority (LA) has a scorecard within the Excel document, which covers the three year period 2009-12 and the Scorecard is attached as Appendix 1.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- (1) the Adoption Scorecard be received;**
- (2) Members note that Halton has met both timeliness threshold indicators sets by DfE.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 This is the second Adoption scorecard produced by the Department for Education and with the exception of one additional indicator in the related information, section, contains the same set of indicators as the previous scorecard.

3.2 The Scorecard is supported by a set of performance thresholds that set out the Government's expectations of LA's on two of the main timeliness indicators, the introduction of these will be staged process, as detailed below:

- Initially the threshold for overall journey (child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family) will be 21 months, moving to 14 months within four years (by 2013-16); and
- The family finding threshold (average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the LA deciding on a match to an adoptive family) will be set at 7 months initially, moving to four months within four years (by 2013-16).

- 3.3 Ministers do not intend to automatically take intervention action in every local authority that fails to meet the performance thresholds when the scorecards are initially published.
- 3.4 It is anticipated that where local authorities do not meet these thresholds some form of monitoring or intervention will take place.

3.5 Threshold Indicators

- 3.5.1 The graph on the scorecard shows Halton's 2008-11 and 2009-12 average performance against the thresholds set for 2010-13 for indicators.
- 3.5.2 The average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted was 567 days which is better than the threshold set (639 days) and the England average (636 days). This also represents a slight improvement in performance from 2008-11 (580 days).
- 3.5.3 The average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the LA deciding on a match to an adoptive family, for 2009-12 was 130 days which is better performance than the threshold (213 days) and the England average (171 days). This represents a drop in performance from 2008-11, although still well below target.
- 3.5.4 This means that Halton has met the thresholds for both timeliness indicators.

3.6 Other indicators

- 3.6.1 For other indicators on the scorecard no thresholds or targets have been set.
- 3.6.2 The number and percentage of children who wait less than the 21 months between entering care and moving in their adoptive family for 2009-12 was 35 children, which equates to 67% of all children who were adopted. This shows an increase of 5% from 2008-11.
- 3.6.3 For the prospective adopters section, data will not be available until 2014.
- 3.6.4 In the related information section, the number of adoptions from care was 35 in 2009-12 which equated to 18% of all children who left care.
- 3.6.5 The figure for the number of children for whom permanence decisions changed away from adoption for 2009-12 was zero.

- 3.6.6 The adoption of children from ethnic minorities has been rounded and is listed as zero and the percentage was suppressed due to low numbers of children from ethnic minorities ceasing care.
- 3.6.7 Of the children aged 5 or above who left care, 10 children were adopted, which equated to 7%.
- 3.6.8 The average length of care proceedings locally between the application being submitted and the case being closed on CAFCASS national Case Management System (CMS) is 61 weeks. This performance has yet to be validated.
- 3.6.9 There were 8 children (rounded to 10 on the scorecard) who were awaiting adoption at 31 March 2011 and who had not yet been placed with their adopters.
- 3.6.10 The data for number of approved prospective adopters at 31 March 2011 will not be available until 2014, however, local data suggests that there were 11 prospective adopters at the end of year.
- 3.6.11 A further indicator has been added to this section since the previous Scorecard release which looks at the average time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family adjusted for foster carer adoptions. This is reported as 501 days for Halton which is less than the England average of 546 days.
- 3.6.12 The scorecard now also enables comparison with Halton's statistical neighbours. In relation to the threshold indicators Halton compares favourably or in line with the statistical neighbour comparators.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Government has set challenging thresholds for Local Authorities to meet and work is ongoing within the Directorate to work towards these. However, it is also worth noting that there are a low number of children in the cohorts for each three year period, which will mean that figures in the scorecard can easily be skewed.
- 4.2 If the Council fails to meet the thresholds set the DfE will take intervention action and it is anticipated that the scorecard will be a limiting judgement in relation to future Children in Care inspections, however, the guidance for this inspection framework has not been released at present.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Not applicable.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

As detailed in 4.1 and 4.2 above

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

Not applicable

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Not applicable

6.4 A Safer Halton

Not applicable

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

Not applicable

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 As detailed 4.2 above

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 There are no additional equality and diversity issues which have been identified in relation to Adoption as a result of the production of the Scorecard.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None under the meaning of the Act